



Planning the Use of Time in Kindergarten

This document is intended to assist kindergarten teachers and elementary administrators as they plan and organize learning opportunities for young children. Schedules and learning experiences for grades one through six (or eight) are discussed in a separate brochure, *"Planning the Weekly Schedule in the Elementary Grades."*

Kindergarten is a very special educational experience for young children. Designing the kindergarten program requires careful thought and planning by kindergarten teachers and any others who may have involvement in the program. The program should be guided by fundamental beliefs and philosophies appropriate for the very young learner. To read the latest research related to kindergarten please access NDE's Kindergarten Position Statement at <http://www.education.ne.gov/oec/kgn.html>.

Instructional Hour Requirements



The minimum time requirements for the school year are established in Nebraska state law. The minimum time required for kindergarten is 400 hours of instruction per year. This is a flexible standard which permits a school to organize the kindergarten program in virtually any pattern of days or hours.

Increasingly, kindergarten is being organized as a full-day program. When kindergarten is full-day, a public district is able to access additional State Aid to assist in funding. For a program to be considered full day for State Aid purposes, it must be offered for the minimum time required of the elementary grades (1032 hours per year).

Local school boards are required through Rule 10 (accreditation) and Rule 14 (approval) to develop a policy which defines instructional time. The local policy should establish clear direction for teachers and administrators regarding what activities may be counted as part of the minimum required time. Rule 10 and Rule 14 direct that lunchtime may not be counted in the minimum 400 hours (or the 1032 hours in the case of a full-day program).



The weekly schedule addresses requirements and reflects best practice. . . .

Rule 10 and Rule 14 require that each elementary school have on file a representative weekly schedule for each classroom teacher encompassing experiences in reading and language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, health, physical education, art, and music. These regulations are intended to assure that children experience a well-rounded curriculum on a weekly basis while giving the schools flexibility in organizing their program.

The way the kindergarten teacher structures and uses time in the classroom and works with the children within that time schedule is a direct reflection of the philosophy and orientation of the program. Schedules for the kindergarten should be sensitive to the developmental characteristics and individual learning capabilities of five-year-olds.

Children should have opportunities to experience a broad array of activities both within the group times and extended blocks of time during which children self-select activities individually or with small groups of classmates. The State Board of Education, in its policy for essential educational opportunities, has recommended that all elementary schools provide all-day, every-day kindergarten. The day should be organized with sufficient predictability to support children's need for stability and with sufficient flexibility to allow the group to respond to unplanned learning opportunities.

No matter how the overall schedule is organized in a particular school (half-day, alternate full-day, or full-day) the day is the basic unit of time. The most important variable in the planning of the kindergarten program is not the length of the day, but the quality, variety, and suitability of the learning experiences that children find there.

The Kindergarten Instructional Program

The kindergarten instructional program should help all children expand understandings in the broad curricular areas by providing rich experiences and activities appropriate for young learners. Therefore, the kindergarten schedule:

- ♥ Provides time for group and individual activities as well as child and teacher initiated activities.
- ♥ Has balance of active and quiet activities.
- ♥ Allows children to tend to personal needs.
- ♥ Organizes the teacher's time so that she/he can work with individual children and with small groups and be able to observe individual children to document their progress.
- ♥ Has some time for group activities such as stories, music, and games.
- ♥ Remembers the contribution outdoor activities make to children's motor development and to their understanding of natural phenomena.
- ♥ Allows time to visit other areas of the school, such as the library media center, gym, and computer lab.
- ♥ Has time for nourishment and rest.
- ♥ Saves time for cleanup by the children.
- ♥ Provides time for reviewing and evaluating the day's activities.

Use of the Daily Planning in the Kindergarten Classroom Time Chart

The following chart is intended to provide guidance in developing an appropriate schedule for the kindergarten day and week. The suggested time allotments shown in the chart have been designated to portray both half-day and full-day kindergarten programs. The critical dimension in these schedules is the proportion of time allotted for the different routines of the day, not the actual sequence of the activities.

Half-Day Program (AM and/or PM Ses-	ARRIVAL	Planning Time	Work Time (50 min.)	Snack Time (15 min.)	Active Play Time (20 min.)	Planning Time (10 min.)	Work Time (25 min.)	Group Time (15 min.)	Evaluation (15 min.)	DEPARTURE
<h3>PLANNING TIME</h3> <p>Planning Time is time for children to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Participate in opening routines (roll, flag, milk count, etc.)					<h3>GROUP TIME</h3> <p>Group Time is time for children to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Participate in group singing, finger plays, saying poetry, playing rhythm instruments◆ Hear from special visitors—community workers, adults with special talents, etc.◆ Learn about group participation◆ Go to the library Media Center◆ Dictate group experience charts◆ Look at audio/visual presentations◆ Participate in group dramatic activities					
<h3>WORK TIME</h3> <p>Work Time is time for children to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Carry out plans for the day in various work areas; reading and writing, socio-dramatic play, blocks, art, math, music, science, etc.◆ Work alone or with a classmate◆ Work with the teacher individually or in a small group; dictating, writing, practicing a new skill, etc.					<h3>ACTIVE PLAY TIME</h3> <p>Active Play Time is time for children to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Move freely using their whole bodies in indoor and outdoor settings◆ Play age-appropriate group games◆ Use playground equipment					
<h3>SNACK TIME</h3> <p>Snack Time is time for children to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Experience new foods and learn about nutrition◆ Socialize with friends◆ Learn self-help skills◆ Practice math skills by helping to prepare/distribute snacks					<h3>QUIET TIME</h3> <p>Quiet Time is time for children to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Listen to an adult or older child read◆ Look at books◆ Listen to records, tapes etc.					
<h3>REST TIME</h3> <p>Rest Time (may be reduced as year progresses) is time for children to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Relax and sleep as necessary◆ Listen to quiet music◆ Find out there are ways to rest and relax without sleeping◆ Visit privately with a friend or the teacher◆ Think about future activities					<h3>EVALUATION TIME</h3> <p>Evaluation Time helps children to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Verbalize in the group setting what they have done and/or learned◆ Share things they have made◆ Plan for future activities◆ Begin to appreciate another’s point of view					
Full-Day Program (either alternate days or every day)	ARRIVAL	(AM)	Planning	Work Time	Snack Time	Active Play Time	Group Time	Lunch and Recess		DEPARTURE
		(PM)	Rest Time	Quiet Time	Group Time	Active Play Time	Planning Time	Work Time	Group Time	



NOTE: All times shown are approximate; however, the relative proportion of time allotted to different types of activity should not vary. (e.g.—The proportion of time devoted to work time should exceed the group time. This applies to both half-day and full-day programs.)



Good Points to Remember

The schedule should be organized to allow for the majority of the learning experiences to be integrated across subject areas. It is not desirable to plan a schedule characterized by short time slots and specific subject designations. This type of schedule generally characterizes a program where most of the activities are directed to the whole group by the teacher and where there is considerable dependence on commercial workbooks or worksheets, approaches not thought to represent best practice for the kindergarten.

Often, the most difficult aspect of planning an appropriate kindergarten instructional program is working around the fixed schedules of others in the school setting. This would include finding appropriate time for visiting the school library; for helping teachers such as special education and curriculum specialists; for all-school activities such as assemblies, disaster drills, lunch, and so on. Each situation is unique and no blanket response can be provided to address this issue. Some generalizations can be helpful:

- 
- ♥ Remember that kindergarten children's need for stability and predictability suggests that most of the day's activity should be carried out in their own classroom. Moving from place to place wastes time and creates opportunities for inappropriate behavior. In addition, going to another room for some subjects diminishes opportunities for correlation and sometimes puts small children in physical spaces intended for older children (for example, using the tables and chairs in an art room designed for high school students). If subject matter specialists (art, music, or physical education) are assigned to the kindergarten, they should work closely with the kindergarten teacher to plan activities which relate to what is currently happening in the classroom. Most of the time that specialist should come to the kindergarten room to work with the children.
 - ♥ Encourage special education teachers to come to the classroom to work with children so that the support they provide to special needs children will be connected to the ongoing life of the classroom and is integrated into daily kindergarten experiences.
 - ♥ Do not allow the regularly scheduled time slots for special teachers and outside activities to fragment the overall schedule. Try to arrange the schedule so that interruptions occur at natural transition times (e.g. just before lunch).
 - ♥ Examine the overall impact of participation in a particular activity on the ongoing activities in the classroom. Sometimes it might be better to decline participation, if that is an option.
 - ♥ Conclude the day in the kindergarten classroom so that important recall and evaluation of the day's happenings occur there for all children.
- 



REFERENCES

The Nebraska Department of Education publishes a number of resources to assist teachers in planning and carrying out programs which are both developmentally appropriate and intellectually rigorous:

- ♥ Rule 10 (*Regulations and Procedures for the Accreditation of Schools*) August 1, 2015.
- ♥ Rule 14 (*Regulations and Procedures for the Legal Operation of Approved Nonpublic Schools*) July 28, 2012.
- ♥ A Kindergarten for the 21st Century, NDE's Kindergarten Position Statement is available for download in .pdf format at <http://www.education.ne.gov/oec/kgn.html>
- ♥ The Primary Program: Growing and Learning in the Heartland. Lincoln, NE: Nebraska Department of Education. Nebraska and Iowa Departments of Education. (2001). Available in .pdf format for download from:
http://www.education.ne.gov/oec/pubs/pri_pro/PrimaryProgram.html
- ♥ Curriculum Frameworks and other resources for various subject areas may be ordered by calling 402-471-6692.
- ♥ Additional resources on kindergarten including many videos and books may be borrowed at no cost from the Early Childhood Training Center (1-800-89CHILD) or visit their website at:
<http://www.education.ne.gov/OEC/ectc.html>

The following additional resources are suggested:

Copple, C. & Bredekamp, S. (2009). *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8*. National Association for the Education of Young Children: Washington, DC

Fisher, B. (1998). *Joyful Learning in Kindergarten*. (2nd ed.). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Jones, E., Evans, K., & Rencken, K.S. (2001). *The Lively Kindergarten: Emergent Curriculum in Action*. Washington, DC : National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Neuman, S.B, Copple, C., & Bredekamp, S. (2000). *Learning to Read and Write: Developmentally Appropriate Practices for Young Children*. Washington, DC : National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Wasserman, S. (2000). *Serious Players in the Primary Grades*. (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.



Planning the Use of Time in Kindergarten

Issued Jointly by:

Office of Early Childhood

and

Office of Accountability, Accreditation, and Program Approval

PO Box 94987

Lincoln, Nebraska 68509-4987

Nebraska educators may access and print a copy of this booklet via the website at:

<http://www.education.ne.gov/OEC/pubs/PlanK.pdf>